

FAMILY MATTERS

IN THE FOURTH CIRCUIT COURT

VOLUME 2 | ISSUE 13 | JULY 18, 2025

UPDATES AND
ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR THE
FOURTH CIRCUIT COURT



WHO KICKED THE CAT?



WHAT TO EXPECT IN THIS ISSUE

Thank you, Sarah	2
Back to School	3
Chamber Rule Spotlight	4
Calendar	5

Mr. B was out for lunch and lost track of the time. His company had a policy about being on time, so he ran out of the restaurant, squealed his tires out of the parking lot and sped toward the office. Then a police car stopped him. Mr. B was boiling mad when the police officer gave him a ticket. He thought, "Why aren't the police out there protecting people from criminals? After all, I am a law-abiding, good citizen."



He was still growling when he got to his office. He called his secretary and demanded to know why she had not sent the four letters he had requested she send. When she tried to explain, he interrupted her and said that if she couldn't do her job, he would find someone who could.

The secretary was very upset and muttered to herself how unfair her boss was as she did most of the work around here. In her anger, the secretary threw the letter assignment on the receptionist's desk and snapped, "Get these letters out immediately. You don't do much around here except occasionally answer a few phone calls."

Now, the receptionist was upset, and when she finally left work she was still fuming. By the time she got home and saw her young son lounging and watching TV with a rip in his good pants, she exploded, "How many times have I told you to change your clothes after school?! I am at my wits' end providing for this family. Go to your room and stay there until morning. You're grounded for three weeks."



Her son was hurt and angry and seethed as he walked down the hall. Interrupting his path was his cat. The boy kicked the cat and said, "You probably haven't been up to any good today!"

Who kicked the cat?

As you read through this story by late motivational speaker Zig Zigler, can you identify with any of the characters described? We have all experienced days when emotions are high and we are not treated with compassion. Perhaps you have internalized it, or perhaps you have unknowingly taken it out on someone who was just as undeserving of maltreatment as you. This story shows the domino effect of emotions and actions very clearly. In the real world, however, that pattern may not be as clear.

Our Court hears cases that involve high levels of stress and emotion. Family Law cases in particular cause tensions in a family to be at an all-time high. Transitions, like the upcoming end of summer and beginning of a new school year, only lead to more strain. A stressful day at work or an unexpected speeding ticket thrown into the mix of a stressful home life could cause anyone to lash out. Sometimes, like in the story, children unfairly bear the brunt of our emotions. This story illuminates the importance of awareness, compassion, and self-regulation.



It's powerful to remember that even small acts of compassion can interrupt the chain reaction of hurt. Just being seen, heard, or given a moment of understanding can help someone choose a better path forward for themselves and their family.

As we enter the season of "back-to-school," this is a chance to bring more intention into your daily interactions. What are some ways you can prepare yourself for the transition and the elevated emotions that come with it? When you feel frustration and hurt, how can you express them in a healthy and respectful manner, without taking it out on someone else?

If you would like to listen to Zig Zigler tell this story, you can do so by clicking here: [Who Kicked the Cat?](#)

THANK YOU, SARAH!

This summer, we were joined by intern Sarah White, a rising 2L at Samford University's Cumberland School of Law. She was able to assist us by conducting relevant court improvement research and drafting Status Conference Orders, in addition to gaining practical experience by witnessing numerous court proceedings. Sarah is off to great things, and we are excited to watch. Thank you, Sarah!



BACK TO SCHOOL IS HERE. ARE YOU READY?

A new school year is upon us! This is both an exciting time for kids and a nerve-wracking one. It is also a transition that involves the whole family. Below you will find some tips to ease the transition and ensure success:



Establish a routine

Establishing a consistent routine is important for kids, especially as it relates to parenting plans. It is helpful to transition from the summer parenting schedule to the day-to-day schedule in advance of the first week of school if possible, especially if this is their first time transitioning between households.



Map it out

If your kids are starting at a new school, practice their route to school a week or two before the first day. You could even play in the school playground before school starts. This creates fun memories associated with the school before summer vacation ends.



Talk about first-week jitters and encourage open communication

As parents, fostering open communication with your children is key. Take the time to sit down with your kids and discuss their feelings and expectations about returning to school.

- Reassure your child that being nervous is natural
- Let them express their fears. Perhaps you can offer stories of your own first-day jitters when you were a child.
- Teach them to breathe deeply and slowly to calm their nerves.
- Discuss the scenarios that worry them. For example, if they're worried about who to sit with or talk to on the first day, help them plan a strategy and rehearse it so they'll know what to do.



Celebrate the start of a new school year

If you celebrate the first day of school, your kids will see back-to-school as a transition they can really enjoy. It's going to be a great year!



Limit Screen Time

In today's digital age, excessive screen time can be detrimental to a child's focus and well-being. Set reasonable limits on recreational screen time, and consider making this a family norm. Perhaps you commit to having screen-free evenings.



Involve Your Kids in Back-to-School Shopping

Back-to-school shopping can be a fun and exciting experience for both parents and kids. Involve your children in the process by creating a shopping list together. This not only makes them feel more engaged but also teaches them valuable decision-making skills. And remember, tax-free weekend is coming up! Click [here](#) to learn more about when it is and what is tax exempt: **Tax Free Weekend, July 25-27.**

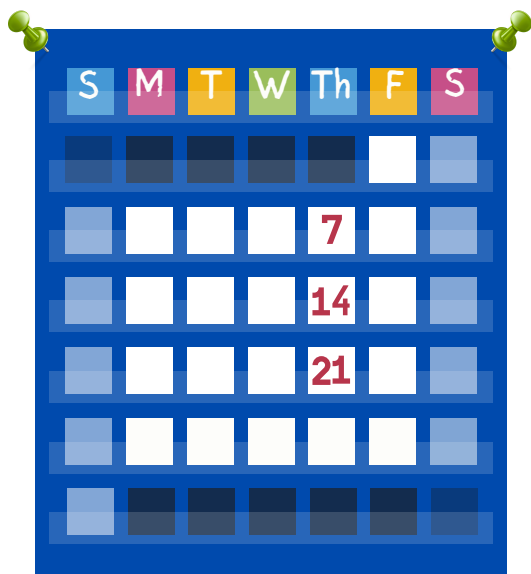
CHAMBER RULE SPOTLIGHT



RULE VII (A). PAGE 12: FILING DEADLINES FOR PRETRIAL MOTIONS AND RESPONSES

1. All pretrial motions must be filed and scheduled for hearing no later than the Court's last regular motion docket before the scheduled trial date. No motions, including motions in limine, will be heard on the day of trial.
2. All pretrial motions, other than motions for summary judgment, must be filed and served on the opposing party with all supporting material, including without limitation, all affidavits, deposition excerpts, discovery responses, proposed temporary parenting schedules, and all other factual material in which the moving party relies for the relief requested at least 14 days (including weekends and holidays) before the motion hearing.
3. All motions to set support should include the movant's sworn income and expense statement and income documentation must be provided to the adverse party by 5:00 p.m. on the Monday before the motion hearing. The non-movant shall provide a sworn income and expense statement and income documentation to the movant by 12:00 p.m. on the Thursday before the motion hearing. Both parties must provide their respective sworn income and expense statements and income documentation to the Court at the time of the motion hearing.
4. If a motion is opposed, a written response is encouraged, but not required. Any responses filed must be filed by 12:00 p.m. on the Tuesday before the motion hearing AND a PDF courtesy copy shall be emailed to the Judicial Assistant at: ronnellgriffin@jnsnashville.gov at such time the response is filed. Hand delivery of a hard copy is permissible as well.
5. Replies to responses are not required. Any reply must be filed by 12:00 p.m. on the Wednesday before the motion hearing AND a PDF courtesy copy shall be emailed to the Judicial Assistant at: ronnellgriffin@jnsnashville.gov at the time the reply is filed. Hand delivery of a hard copy is permissible as well.
6. Motions for summary judgment and responses and replies to the same are governed by the Tennessee Rules of Civil Procedure, unless otherwise ordered by the Court.
7. First time continuance requests are liberally granted.

CALENDAR

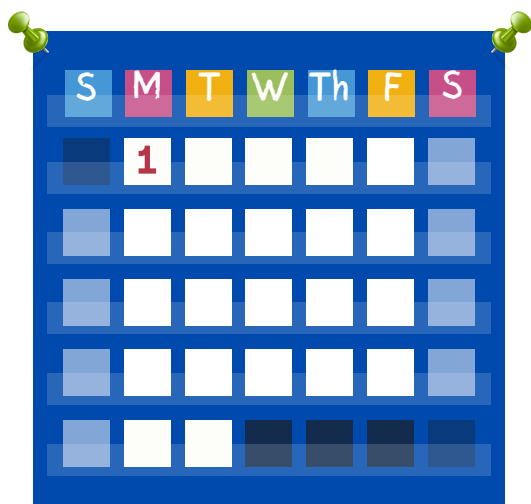


AUGUST

8/7: Special Master's Status Conference Docket at 9 a.m. via Zoom, No Pro Se Docket

8/14: Judge Philip E. Smith's Portrait Unveiling

8/21: Judge Williams' Status Conference Docket at 1 p.m. in person or via Zoom



SEPTEMBER

9/1: Office Closed for Labor Day Holiday

For a complete view of our regularly scheduled dockets and available court dates, please see the calendar page on our website by clicking here: [Website Calendar](#) or by scanning the QR code:



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Judge Stephanie J. Williams

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